

Chairpersons Senator Moore and Representative Abercrombie, Vice-chairs Senator Slossberg and Representative McGee and members of the Human Services Committee. You have received several comments concerning Raised Bill 6765, An Act Concerning Interpreter Qualifications. I would like to respond to some of the issues raised in those testimonies.

First is the issue that the proposed language “lowers the qualifications” for those interpreters who would be able to interpret in legal settings. I assure you this is not the case. At last year’s public hearing several people expressed concerns that the proposed legislation would shrink the available interpreter pool. The Task Force listened to these concerns and to the directive from your committee to look for ways to expand our pool of available interpreters. We focused on opportunities that would develop ways to increase available numbers and maintain quality. The focus in the testimonies is on those who possess NAD IV certification, as the current statute requires NAD V. Those who have NAD IV certification earned that credential almost 15 years ago (as that test has been discontinued upon NAD and RID merging to create a new national interpreter certification system) and therefore have had many years to continue to develop their skills. Also they have been required by our national professional organization to participate in 80 hours of professional training and development over a four year cycle, which means they have accumulated over 300 hours since being initially certified. We did not feel we were lowering a standard instead we believed we were opening up the pool of potential candidates. They would still be required to complete the requisite 30 hours of initial legal training and an additional 20 hours of legal training during each of their future 4 year cycles if they wanted to be qualified to continue to interpret in legal settings.

The next issue suggests that the monitoring of interpreters who would be deemed appropriate in a given setting be left to Human Resource Departments of school districts and interpreting agencies. As proposed, the monitoring board would only become aware of an issue if someone were to file a complaint that an “interpreter” was not qualified per CT Statute. As a volunteer board, they would

not have the time and resources to be actively searching for violators. Their role, as was outlined in the proposed language, is more educational than punitive. The concerns that were shared with the Task Force, and at last year's public hearing, illustrate that parents felt they had nowhere to go when their child was provided with an "interpreter" that was not qualified. Individuals who were not provided with appropriate communication access in hospitals and other venues wanted to know where they could go for assistance. After receiving such a complaint the monitoring board's task will be to gather information, and if it is determined there was a "violation" the first response will be to attempt to educate. Any "punitive" measure would only be considered if there were recurring violations.

Lastly I would like to emphasize that the Task Force was comprised of representatives from the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Community and interpreters. We maintained contact with our communities throughout the process of developing this proposal. We conducted Town Hall meetings throughout the state to share the language and concepts in the proposed bill and we listened to concerns and questions, adjusting language and requirements in response. We have maintained open communication with the members of our communities and have been continually supported. We do believe, when passed, the updating of the standards and the institution of a monitoring board will assist the members of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing communities in achieving better access.

Thank you.

MarySue Owens,

Chairperson, CRID Task Force on Interpreter Qualifications